



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

1511 14,000 Road, P.O. Box 368, Altamont, KS 67330
866-784-5500
www.twinvalleyelectric.coop

TWIN VALLEY
ELECTRIC CO-OP

NEWS

Twin Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Board of Trustees

Bryan Coover
President

Larry Hubbell
Vice President

Dareld Nelson
Treasurer

Bryan Hucce
Secretary

Rodney Baker
Trustee

Tom Ellison
Trustee

Diane McCartney
Trustee

Jared Nash
Trustee

Jason Zwahlen
Trustee

Staff

Angie Erickson
CEO

Office Hours

Monday-Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Contact Us

1511 14,000 Road
P.O. Box 368
Altamont, KS 67330
866-784-5500
www.twinvalleyelectric.coop

FROM THE MANAGER

Know the Signs of a Scam

It's no secret that consumers with a water, gas or electricity connection have long been targets for utility scams, but fraudsters have changed their tactics since the COVID-19 pandemic. As consumers became more reliant on technology for work, school and commerce, scammers noted these shifts and adapted their tactics to this changed environment.

Imposter scams are the No. 1 type of fraud reported to the Federal Trade Commission. While scam artists may come to your door posing as a utility worker who works for the "power company," in today's more connected world, attempts are more likely to come through an electronic device, via email, phone or text.

Common Types of Scams

A scammer may claim you are overdue on your electric bill and threaten to

disconnect your service if you don't pay immediately. Whether this is done in-person, by phone, text or email, the scammers want to scare you into immediate payment, so you don't have time to think clearly.

If this happens over the phone, simply hang up. If you're concerned about your bill, call us at 800-784-5500. Our phone number can also be found on your monthly bill and on our website, twinvalleyelectric.coop. If the scam is by email or text, delete it before taking any action. If you're unsure, you can always check the status of your account by calling us, or accessing Smart Hub through our website or the app. Remember, TVEC will never attempt to demand immediate payment after just one notice.



Angie Erickson

Continued on page 12D ▶



HAPPY
★
4TH OF JULY
★★★
INDEPENDENCE DAY
Our office will be closed on
Monday, July 4, for the holiday.

10 Easy Ways to Save

Habits you can tweak to save energy

1. Use cold water to wash your clothes.
2. Unplug battery chargers when not in use.
3. Skip the heat-dry setting on your dishwasher.
4. Unplug appliances and electronics not in use.
5. Run full loads of laundry instead of several smaller ones.
6. When drying clothes, include a dry towel for the first 20 minutes.
7. Keep your refrigerator at 35-38 F and your freezer at 0 F.
8. Reduce the setting on your water heater.
9. Use smart power strips that shut off power to items not in use.
10. When buying new appliances, consider Energy Star versions.



Beat the Peak This Summer

As temperatures begin to spike, there are steps you can take to save money on energy bills this summer.

According to the Department of Energy, a typical home uses a whopping 48% of energy expenditures just on the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system (HVAC) system. Although a majority of that figure is spent on heating, Americans still spend \$29 billion every year to power their air conditioners.

Aside from replacing your central air conditioner with a newer, high-efficiency model, there are some things you can do to increase efficiency and reduce your energy bills.

Besides weather stripping and caulking around windows and doors in your home (always a good idea regardless of the time of year), consider the following:

- ▶ Close curtains, blinds and shades during the hottest part of the day. Not only is about one-third of a home's energy lost around windows, but about 76% of sunlight that falls on standard double-pane windows enters the home to become heat, according to energy.gov.
- ▶ If you don't already have one, install a programmable or smart thermostat. You can save up to 10% a year on heating and cooling by adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for 8 hours a day, according to energy.gov.
- ▶ Clean the filter and get your unit inspected by a HVAC professional.
- ▶ Consider changes to your landscaping. Greenery that includes

shade trees and plants that insulate the foundation can reduce energy costs.

- ▶ Ventilate the attic and check insulation. Adequately sized vents and an attic fan can help prevent hot air from building up. If your attic has less than 6 to 8 inches of insulation, consider adding more. By addressing air leaks around your home and adding insulation, homeowners can save around 10% annually on energy bills, according to energystar.gov.
 - ▶ Get a pre-season checkup by a professional HVAC technician, which could help your air conditioner run more efficiently.
 - ▶ Make sure your outdoor condenser unit is clean and free from debris. Ideally, the unit should be in the shade.
 - ▶ Use your clothes dryer and oven during the cooler parts of the day.
 - ▶ Consider a professional energy audit to reveal where your home is inefficient, including air leaks and exposed duct work.
- Increased summer electric demand not only affects the monthly budget, but it can also seriously strain your home's electrical system, which can create dangerous shock and fire hazards. Flickering or dimming lights or frequent circuit breaker trips are signs of an overloaded electrical system or faulty wiring that should be checked immediately by a qualified electrician.
- For more information on electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY Tip of the Month

The combined use of large appliances like dishwashers, clothes dryers and washing machines account for the largest percentage of electricity use in the average U.S. home. Take small steps to save energy. Only run full loads in the dishwasher, and thoroughly scrape food from dishes before loading. Dry towels and heavier cottons separate from lighter-weight clothing, and clean the lint screen after every use. Wash clothing in cold water to save energy used to heat water.

SOURCE: ENERGY INFORMATION ADMINISTRATION AND DEPT. OF ENERGY



Preventing Costly Copper Theft BY PAUL WESSLUND

Strange things start happening when the world price of copper skyrockets to record levels like it did this year.

An Arkansas hospital faced a possible delay in opening when thieves stole copper wiring at a construction site; hundreds of West Virginia homes and businesses lost phone and Wi-Fi service when a copper-filled cable was stolen from the region's internet provider; and 700 streetlights went out in Los Angeles when thieves made off with 370,000 feet of copper wire.

Copper is incredibly useful. It's flexible and conducts electricity well. It's a staple for utilities and is used to make nearly every type of electronic device. Copper's nontoxic nature and resistance to corrosion also make it useful in plumbing.

A Risk to Public Safety

So, there's lots of it around, and over the decades when copper prices have gone up, the thieves have come out. Copper theft can have consequences way beyond just the inconvenience of stolen property.

According to a 2008 FBI report, copper thieves threaten critical infrastructure by targeting electrical substations, cellular towers, telephone land lines, railroads, water wells, construction sites and vacant homes for lucrative profits. Copper theft from these targets disrupts the flow of electricity, telecommunications, transportation, water supply, heating and security and emergency services. It also presents a risk to both public safety and national security.

Copper crimes can result in death, with regular reports of thieves being electrocuted while removing wire from utility poles or substations. Stealing copper also threatens the lives of utility workers by disconnecting critical safety devices.

Copper theft has been a regular problem for utilities and even private homes under construction. Theft cases started increasing dramatically in 2001 when the construction boom in China sent demand, and prices, for copper shooting skyward.

Copper is the New Oil

The copper price and theft rate has fluctuated since then but started going up again a year ago for two reasons: the economic recovery from the pandemic and demand for renewable energy.

As the use of solar energy and wind power grows, more copper wiring will be needed to carry the electricity it produces. There's a lot more copper wiring in an electric vehicle than one that runs on gasoline. Copper's value to greener power has led some observers to refer to it as "the new oil."

Last year, copper prices hit a record high. In March of this year, they went even higher. Copper's continued importance



Copper theft has been a regular problem for utilities and even private homes under construction but the problem started increasing in 2001.

to utilities, the economy and to criminals, has led to a greater focus on preventing thefts.

Laws have been toughened over the past 20 years, and now all 50 states have statutes in place to reduce copper theft. Many of those laws, including the Scrap Metal Theft Reduction Act in Kansas, focus on making sure that scrap metal dealers know the source of the copper they're buying. Companies have developed ways to secure wiring in air conditioning units and come up with coatings that can identify stolen property. Some copper products are being stamped with identifying codes, and video surveillance is being added to areas with a lot of copper.

Electric utilities, including cooperatives, have placed special emphasis on preventing copper theft. Over the years, utilities have launched public awareness campaigns, offered rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of thieves, marked copper wire for easier recovery from scrap metal dealers and collaborated with stakeholders. In addition, law enforcement has become more responsive to electric utilities facing copper theft and collaborate with utilities to recover more stolen copper and arrest those responsible.

You can also help. Many copper thieves have been captured when observant citizens saw something suspicious and called 911.

PAUL WESSLUND writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.

Lightning Facts

- 1** Flashes of lightning between a thunderstorm and the earth are called cloud to ground.
- 2** There is roughly 5 to 10 times more intra-cloud lightning than cloud-to-ground lightning.
- 3** The vertical extent of cloud-to-ground lightning averages 3 to 4 miles.
- 4** Lightning often strikes up to 10 miles away from rainfall.
- 5** Lightning can occur in winter during heavy snowfalls.
- 6** Lightning can strike in the same place twice.
- 7** Lightning has 100 million to 1 billion volts and contains billions of watts.

SOURCES: NATIONAL LIGHTNING SAFETY INSTITUTE,
NOAA NATIONAL SEVERE STORMS LABORATORY

Know the Signs of a Scam *Continued from page 12A* ▶

Some scammers may falsely claim you have been overcharged on your bill and say they want to give a refund. It sounds easy. All you have to do is click or press a button to initiate the process. If you proceed, you will be prompted to provide banking or other personal information. Instead of money going into your bank account, the scammers can drain your account and use personal information such as a social security number for identity theft.

If this “refund” scam happens over the phone, just hang up and block the phone number to prevent future robocalls. If this scam attempt occurs via email (known as a “phishing” attempt) or by text (“smishing”), do not click any links. Instead, delete it, and if possible, block the sender. If you do overpay on your energy bill, TVEC will automatically apply the credit to your next bill. When in doubt, contact us.

Defend Yourself Against Scams

Be wary of calls or texts from unknown numbers. Be suspicious of an unknown person claiming to be a utility worker who requests banking or other personal information.

Never let anyone into your home that you don't know unless you have a scheduled appointment or reported a problem. Twin Valley employees wear uniforms and drive trucks with the Twin Valley logo. When we perform work on our members' property or come into your home, our employees are professionals and will always identify themselves.

We want to help protect our community against utility scams, and you can help create the first line of defense. Please report any potential scams to us so we can spread the word to prevent others in the community from falling victim.

